

Milena Dragicevic: More Like Air Than Land

Opening: Thursday 15th May 2025, 6 pm

Duration: 16th May until 12th July 2025

Galerie Martin Janda presents *More Like Air Than Land*, **Milena Dragicevic**'s sixth solo exhibition, from 16th May to 12th July 2025.

The adjective "transatlantic" usually pops up when it comes to what connects the countries on the other side of the ocean, what they have in common. While the overseas remains a distinct point in the distance, a Eurocentrically perspectivized elsewhere, the transatlantic implies what connects the journey from one side of the sea to the other.

Milena Dragicevic has given this Atlantic in-between, which today is mostly crossed rather than traversed, a name and thus territorialized it: *Transatlantica*, an unknown but familiar territory and at the same time a space of possibility, real, fictitious, virtual or abstract. *Transatlantica* as the in-between of continents stands for the presence in several places at the same time, for constructive contradiction and coexisting opposites.

Dragicevic's series of *Erections for Transatlantica* lends form to this imaginary transatlantic space through abstracted fragments of objects, subjects or networks, without subordinating it to a defining power and thus seeking to colonize it. The floating forms, which are superimposed on a dark background or appear to be anchored to it, have a delimiting contour, in part also a drawing-like level within this, which seems to explore the field as if in a fictitious cartography. In their layering, the sometimes glazed and then partially translucent layers reveal a vague historicity. In any case, the presence of several layers endows the painterly terrain with the idea of a becoming rather than a fixed being. These sometimes almost organic and then again constructive-looking structures unfold in all directions and yet are fixed in the coordinates of the picture plane. They are embedded on a background dominated by one color tone and formulate a contrast without appearing dissonant: an opposition that implies the idea of togetherness.

The *née Erections for Transatlantica* shown here refer to a recurring motif that Dragicevic has taken from the image of a modernist clay sculpture. Their formal language is rudimentarily reminiscent of horses, mountains and triangles and thus archetypal elements found in both natural and constructed landscapes. Ultimately, however, these works are less about an image than about the assertion of a form. Shapes traverse the canvas like a passage. It is full of references and borrowings, delves into personal histories and activates numerous overlapping references. Together, the works form a ramified system that is expanded in Dragicevic's more recent paintings, which also mark a transition.

While the *Erections for Transatlantica* are vertical pictures of the same format that radiate a certain tectonics, her latest works are horizontal. They lie on the wall, resting as it were against the background that gives them support. These paintings are more ephemeral – less territorially anchored, more air than land: *More Like Air Than Land*. They explore form not in movement, but in the fathoming of time and memory, which has been deposited and atmospherically condensed in them. They reflect on the past

and its resonance in the present. They are images of remembrance, of silence, perhaps also of absence and loss.

Like Milena Dragicevic's other works, they are also accompanied by the name of a person who appears in the title – female figures who are important to her and who inspire her, but who also give the conceptual an individual frame of reference. They do not inscribe themselves figuratively into the works but rather lay themselves over the body of the picture like a resonance chamber. Their presence by name opens up an associative space that unlocks further visual, political and social spaces.

In their interplay and their vertical and horizontal reference to the space they occupy and thus change, the works continue and develop ideas. They reflect on painting as a place of rebellion against the challenges and impositions of the present. They draw their resistive power from the potential of painting to create new worlds, to elevate the abstract to a space for reflection on the real and to transfer the specific into larger contexts.

Vanessa Joan Müller

Milena Dragicevic, *1965 in Knin (YU), lives and works in London (UK).